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## A PHANTOM TALE OF FEMALE INGRATITUDE

Several years ago I learned of an unidentified scene on some French ivory caskets of the early fourteenth century which had baffled the scholarship of many antiquarians and students of literature. Since then I have met with a number of other reflections in art of the same motif, some of them so elaborate and so fully explained as to give us practically the whole story. Although that story, popular as it must have been in its own day, does not seem to have survived in a literary form, yet I think that we may definitely point to it as the purest form of the "Maiden and the Dogs" episode, and perhaps as the source of the more corrupt forms which survive in the *Chevalier a l'Espee*, the *Vengeance Raguidel*, the prose *Tristan*, and the Dutch *Lancelot*.

Caskets on which a scene from this story is carved are to be found at Cracow Cathedral and in the Pierpont Morgan collection in this country; a panel from a similar casket is in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup> These carvings show a knight, mounted or on foot, killing with lance or sword a "wodehouse," or wild man of the woods. On the two caskets the wodehouse is represented as carrying in his arms a damsel, who holds up her hands in supplication to the knight.

The vogue of this scene as an artistic motif is confirmed by the detailed inventory made for Louis, Duke of Anjou and Regent of France, in the years 1364 and 1365.<sup>2</sup> There are three objects which are described as adorned with this subject. The first description runs:

Une coupe toute esmailliee . . . ou fons de la coupe qui est cizelee a un esmail azure, ou quel a un chevalier qui veut tuer d'un glaive un homme sauvage qui enmaine une dame.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Romanische Forschungen*, V, 256; *Art in America*, V, 19; O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Ivory Carvings in the British Museum*, p. 127. In all three caskets the scene with which we are concerned is juxtaposed to another scene derived from the *Queste del Saint Graal*, with which it has no clear connection.

<sup>2</sup> *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, L, 168.

<sup>3</sup> Marquis de Laborde, *Notice des Émaux*, II, 21.



IVORY CASKET IN THE MORGAN COLLECTION

The second runs:

Un bacin a deux biberons, dore dedens et dehors, et ou fons a un esmail d'azur ou quel a une foreste ou il a un chevalier qui se combat en estant a un homme sauvage qui a derriere lui une dame a genolz qui joint les mains.<sup>1</sup>

The third runs:

Un hanap couvert . . . ou fons du dit hanap a un esmail d'azur, et ou dit esmail a un homme a cheval qui ist d'un chastel, et tient en sa main destre une espee nue pour ferir sur un homme sauvage qui emporte une dame, et ou couvecle par dedens a un austre esmail azure, ou quel est une dame qui tient en sa main une chayenne dont un lyon est lyez, et sur ledit lyon a un homme sauvage.<sup>2</sup>

This last feature is of special interest in relation to an obscure painting at the Alhambra, called to my attention by Dr. H. W. L. Dana. In the Hall of Justice there is a ceiling of leather, elliptical in shape, on which between 1380 and 1400 a Christian artist of the school of Seville painted several scenes of combat and the chase.<sup>3</sup> It is a striking fact that this painting must have been done for the Moslem sultan of Granada in defiance of the laws of the Prophet against the representation of human or animal figures. The painting displays among various other scenes the charging knight, the wounded wodehouse, and the captive damsel whom we have found on the ivory caskets. But there appears also the incongruous feature of a sleepy lion, which the damsel holds in leash by a chain. We shall presently see that the lion does not belong in this scene at all. A reference to the last quotation from the inventory of Louis of Anjou accounts for the interloper. The motif of the rescue of the lady from the wodehouse must have been blended by the Spanish painter with the motif of the lady with the pet lion, and such a *hanap* as that described in the inventory was perhaps the source of the confusion.

We are no nearer, however, to an understanding of this scene or to a knowledge of the story of which it forms a part. That information, curiously enough, we derive from an English book of hours, dating from about 1325, in the possession of Mr. H. Yates Thompson, of London.<sup>4</sup> The lower margins of this book, known as the

<sup>1</sup> Marquis de Laborde, *Notice des Émaux*, II, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Goury and Jones, *Alhambra*, I, Pl. XLVIII; A. Michel, *Histoire de l'Art*, III, Part 2, p. 754.

<sup>4</sup> H. Y. Thompson, *Fifty Manuscripts, Second Series*, No. 57, pp. 50 ff.

*Taymouth Horae*, are filled with illuminations of considerable spirit and artistic merit, depicting scenes from romances and legends of the saints, quite irrelevant to the text above them; and among them are those which illustrate our story. In another manuscript of approximately the same date, the *Smithfield Decretals* at the British Museum (MS 10 E IV), a similar irrelevant use is made of the bottom margins, and here too we find eighteen scenes from our tale.<sup>1</sup> Luckily in the case of the *Taymouth Horae* the illuminations which concern us have been distinguished above the rest by a series of explanatory inscriptions in Anglo-Norman. Accordingly, while the story itself in literary form has not been preserved, we have full information concerning it.

The inscriptions run as follows:

Fol. 61 verso: Ci uount les damoyseles au boys dedure.

62 recto: Ci uient le Wodewose et rauist lun des damoyseles coillaunt des fleurs.

62v.: Ci porte il la damoysele en ses bras.

63r.: Ci uient enyas vn viel chiualer et rescout la damoysele. [This is, of course, the scene which enjoyed an extraordinary vogue.]

63v.: Cy le viel chiualer meyne auant la damoysele.

64r.: Cy uient un ioene chiualer de chalanger la damoysele.

64v.: Cy met le uiel chiualer la damoysele en milu el chemyn entre li et le ioene chiualer.

65r.: Cy refusa la damoysele le uiel chiualer et sen ua au ioene chiualer.

65v.: Cy uient le ioene chiualer a chalenger le levrer au uiel chiualer.

66r.: Cy est le leurer mys de suz un arbre en milu el chemin dentre li .ii. chiualers. et par couenant taille. si cornunt li chiualers et au quel deaux le leurer sen ua. si en joyt le leurer.

66v.: Cy uient le leurer au uiel chiualer sun mestre et li ioene chiualer irrousement sen uoet combatre od le uiel chiualer et dit quil uoet auoir le leurer od la damoysele.

67r.: Cy sen combatent li .ii. chiualers et li uiel chiualer en ocist li ioeune chiualer.

67v.: Cy sen ua li uiel chiualer od sun leurer et guerpist la damoysele seule par sa desnaturesce.

The condign fate which overtakes the lady left alone in the wood is vividly suggested in the last of the illuminations in the *Smithfield Decretals*. As she sits disconsolate in her red dress, wringing her

<sup>1</sup> Fols. 69v., 72r., 72v., 73r., 74r., 74v., 101r., 101v., 102r., 102v., 103r., 103v., 104r., 104v., 105r., 105v., 106r., 106v.

hands, a brown bear walks up on his hind legs from one side and clutches her shoulder with his paws, and from the other a grizzly approaches and takes a large nip out of her elbow.

From the consideration of this artistic evidence, then, we learn that this moral tale must have been well known in England and France in the first half of the fourteenth century. Its literary life, however, seems to have been brief, for, as we have seen, in 1364 or 1365, Louis of Anjou's cataloguer, a man who gives evidence of wide acquaintance with literary sources, was unable to identify a scene from it, and in the last quarter of the century the Spanish painter by the introduction of the chained lion displays a similar ignorance.

The name of the old knight, Enyas, suggests a connection with Aeneas or Helyas, Knight of the Swan, whose name at times was spelled with an *n* instead of the *l*, but mediaeval literature relates no such adventure of either hero. An analogue to the first half of the story, however, is found in chapter 117 of the *Gesta Romanorum*.<sup>1</sup> It tells of the rescue of a lady from a tyrant, who had ravished her and was about to slay her, and then of her surrendering herself to her ravisher while her rescuer was away making preparations for their marriage. The story concludes, like ours, in retribution upon both the evildoers, which in this case takes the form of hanging.

The chief interest of our story lies in its clear relationship to a similar episode to be found in the *Chevalier a l'Espee*,<sup>2</sup> the *Vengeance Raguidel*,<sup>3</sup> the prose *Tristan*,<sup>4</sup> and the Dutch *Lancelot*.<sup>5</sup> A comparison of these versions shows that our exemplum is not only the most neatly pointed, but the only logically developed, form of the episode; and therefore it may be regarded as perhaps the source, or at least the closest descendant of the source that is preserved to us.<sup>6</sup> The point of the motif obviously lies in three factors: the claim of the knight on the maiden's gratitude, the claim of the knight on the dog's fidelity, and the contrast between the fidelity of the dog and

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Oesterley, p. 459.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. E. C. Armstrong, ll. 861-1191.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. M. Friedwagner, ll. 4482-4785.

<sup>4</sup> Ed. Loeseth, pp. 128 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Ed. Jonckbloet, II, pp. 89 f.

<sup>6</sup> In fact, the exemplum is uncannily like the hypothetical source sketched by Gaston Paris in the *Histoire Littéraire*, XXX, 63 f.

the woman's ingratitude. In the *Chevalier a l'Espee* and the prose *Tristan* the hero of the episode has no particular claim on the woman's gratitude. In the *Chevalier a l'Espee*, moreover, since the dogs belong to the maiden, the fact that they choose Gawain in preference to her rather creates an ignominious resemblance between their conduct and that of the lady than exhibits a glorious contrast between canine and feminine fidelity. Finally, in the case of the *Vengeance Raguidel* and the Dutch *Lancelot* the climax of the tale is never reached, since the dogs are not given the opportunity to choose. Only in our phantom exemplum are all three essential features found.

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